

Cobbe, Frances Power The Future of the Lower Animals

Q II  
Vivisection  
Pamphlet  
1884



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
Duke University Libraries



FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS FROM VIVISECTION.

THE FUTURE  
OF THE  
LOWER ANIMALS.

BY

*FRANCES POWER COBBE.*

---

Victoria Street Society  
FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS FROM VIVISECTION,  
*United with the*  
International Association  
FOR THE TOTAL SUPPRESSION OF VIVISECTION,  
Offices :—1, VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.

Vivisection  
Pamphlet

## THE FUTURE OF THE LOWER ANIMALS.

---

AMONG the problems which have presented themselves with painful urgency to the minds of many Anti-vivisectionists is that of the Future Life of Brutes. So long as we contemplated their humble existences—as Mr. CARLILL does in the *Nineteenth Century* for last month,\*—as containing at least as great a surplus of pleasure over pain as the ordinary life of man, it was natural for us to do little more than wish that their beautiful intelligence and devotion might not be extinguished, and that it might be permitted to ourselves to renew in a perfect world those relations with some of them which have contributed no inconsiderable item to our enjoyment on this earth. Though MAHOMET—that typical Semite—cheerfully announced that only three animals will be admitted to Paradise, to wit, his own Camel, Balaam's Ass, and Tobit's Dog, we, Aryans, have been apt, like the hero of the Mahabharata, to think that a hound who has followed his master faithfully here below might be permitted to attend him on a higher way. Eden itself, to our fancy, would be somewhat incomplete were it only inhabited by lofty intelligences, with no playful beasts or warbling birds to people the lower ranks of life. If music and flowers (or some glorified analogues of them) may lawfully be anticipated, those amongst us who love animals better than harps or roses, cannot be blamed for hoping for their presence

---

\* We recommend this article to our readers as, on the whole, sensible and comforting, though the writer seems to us to leave out of sight some very important points of the problem he discusses; notably the large share which, for pain and pleasure, the affections take in the lives of the higher kinds of animals; beside the whole topic of scientific torture with which we are concerned. He admits, however, fully, the enormously enhanced sensitiveness to pain in domesticated animals, *e.g.*, the "humanised dog." It is, alas! chiefly these very hyper-sensitive creatures who are chosen as victims by vivisectors.

likewise. Further and more seriously. Many of the wisest of thinkers have maintained that the "Spirit of the Beast" may, on metaphysical grounds, be believed to survive the death of its body; while the intense power of affection which some of them exhibit has furnished another argument, embodied in the touching epitaph on a dog—

O'er this sepulchral spot  
 Emblems of hope we twine;  
 If God be Love, what sleeps below was not  
 Without a spark Divine.

But another side of the subject has opened to us since we have learned that to thousands of the most sensitive animals the gift of existence has been transformed into a calamity. Optimists as many of us were before we knew of the crimes of science, our rose coloured views of the general happiness of creation have been all blurred and blotted since we realized the import of the revelations of cruelty contained in such publications as WEBER's *Torture Chamber*, SCHOLL's *Ayez Pitié*, and our own *Light in Dark Places*. The truth—a bitter drop in the cup of our lives—has perforce been drunk in; that Science, by the aid of exquisitely delicate machinery and far-fetched drugs, and skill, and patience, and ingenuity worthy of a God-like instead of a Devil-like task, has achieved the creation of *AGONY* such as simple Nature never knew,—a new factor in the dark problem of evil, never again to be left out of our view.

The sense thus aroused in many minds of the cruel wrongs of vivisected animals, has led them to review with new interest and deeper concern the hypothesis of another life reserved for such creatures when death has relieved them from their undeserved sufferings. The enquiry "Have they another existence?" is no longer merely suggested by tenderness and regret, but pressed on them with the whole weight of their faith in eternal Justice. Perhaps some one special case of which they have read recurs continually, challenging some solution endurable to their moral sense. Perhaps it is PAUL BERT's dog left alone at night, with all the chief nerves of its body dissected out and exposed, and with the clanking engine still forcing air into its lungs, after the torturer, wearied with his work, had gone to rest. Perhaps it is one of those baked to

death by CLAUDE BERNARD in his stove. Perhaps some other poor brute, the victim of SCHIFF, or ROY, or RUTHERFORD, or GOLTZ,—which has been dealt with by Man as Man might be dealt with by God if He were to thrust his adoring servant into Hell. They cannot banish this foully-wronged and tortured animal from their thoughts. It importunes them by day, and when they lie awake at night they almost see it lying on the vivisecting table in the laboratory. It brings a pang and a distraction into their prayers. They implore to be shown how they ought to think of it consistently with their reliance on the Judge of all the earth to do right, and their faith that in His universe there can be no final and remediless injustice.

It is with great diffidence that any one should presume to speak on such a subject, but, as it is often helpful to know what others think, the present writer will venture to say plainly that, so far as appears, there is no possible solution of this heart-wearing question save the bold assumption *that the existence of the vivisected animal (and of course, as a consequence, of other creatures of the same rank in nature) does not end at death.* It is absolutely necessary to postulate a future life for the tortured dog or horse or monkey, if we would escape the unbearable conclusion that a sentient creature, unoffending, nay, incapable of offence, has been given by the Creator AN EXISTENCE WHICH ON THE WHOLE HAS BEEN A CURSE. That conclusion would be blasphemy. Rejecting it with all the energy of our souls, we find ourselves logically driven to assume the future life of (some, at least, among) the lower animals.

And in that future life we are (by the hypothesis) authorized to conceive of the creature as so happy, so raised in the scale of being, as that its past sufferings will be wholly outweighed and nullified, and its existence, taking it altogether, made a boon and not an evil, a benediction, not a calamity. This, and nothing short of it, will satisfy our sense of justice; and it must never be forgotten that though the justice of the Great Lord of All may be, and no doubt *is*, a far more lofty and blessed thing than our poor minds can devise, it can never be a *lesser* justice. It is impossible that He will ever through eternity do aught which, could we

understand it, we should regard with that hatred and loathing wherewith He Himself has made us regard injustice. Neither is it true, as Agnostics frequently argue, that future happiness cannot undo the injustice of past unmerited suffering. It is quite in harmony with the conception of a Righteous Governor of the world, that He may for good reason permit undeserved pain to fall on a being to whom He knows, with the unerring certainty of Omniscience, that it shall hereafter be abundantly compensated and made up. This, in fact, is the great distinction between Divine and human Justice. Not that the former is different in kind from the latter, but that it works in unlimited space and time :

*“Tu n’as qu’un jour pour être juste,  
J’ai l’éternité devant Moi.”*

Of course the resource of believing in the future life of tortured animals cannot be available to those who are unfortunate enough to have lost faith in the future life of human beings ; and even to those who hold firmly by the creed that “the soul of a Man never dies,” there are great difficulties in believing that creatures of a lower grade, who are not Moral Free Agents, should likewise survive corporeal dissolution. Many of the strongest grounds on which we build our own hopes of immortality are lacking when we would extend them to the brutes ; and there is a special stumbling-block which never fails to be placed in our way, which is briefly this : If we suppose a Dog or Horse or Elephant to live after death, it is impossible (it is said) to limit the privilege to such noble animals. Below them, shading off by the finest degrees, are humbler and yet humbler ranks of vertebrate, and finally of invertebrate, creatures. Beneath *Man*, and between him and the Dog or Horse, there is, indeed, a sufficiently sharp line, where Reason and Morality and Religion (in all but some vague and shadowy sense) apparently stop ; and where, accordingly, it is easy to suppose the limits of immortality are drawn. But if we descend a step below human beings we find no further excuse for limiting the great boon at the bounds of one species or another. Thus to argue for the immortality of a Dog is (it is contended) to land ourselves in the absurdity of arguing practically for the immortality of a Coral-insect.

The mode of viewing the question which leads us into this dilemma is essentially a physico-scientific, not a moral or spiritual, one. It is true that in the material world there are no breaks in the chain of being—or, if there ever were, HAECKEL and his fellow Darwinians fill them up boldly with hypothetical links. But the Life after Death is not a matter wherewith physical science is concerned, or whereto it bears any testimony. It belongs to the moral and spiritual order of things; and in that order there *are* breaks and chasms, over which we pass *per saltum*, if at all. Not seldom, for example, does a human soul traverse in an hour the measureless moral abyss between the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light; and undergo a *palingenesis* to which nothing that happens in earth or air or waters affords the slightest parallel. And in this particular matter of Immortality, if one single living Man be now an Immortal Being, that man must, at one time or other, have leaped from the Mortal to the Immortal at a bound. There must have been a time, earlier or later, before or after birth, when he was not immortal, but might have perished as an abortion; and again a time when he had become immortal and would not perish were his body reduced to ashes. It is idle, then, for any one who believes in human immortality, to object to the possible immortality of a dog on the ground that no line can be drawn between the highly intelligent mammal and a coral insect. We may retort, “Neither can any line be drawn between an adult Man, whom we recognise to be an immortal being, and the first formless embryo which he once was;—and which, strangely enough, was (we are told) almost undistinguishable from the embryo of the dog.”

Perhaps this parallel between individual human development which slowly brings the child up to the level of Immortality may afford not only an answer to the above discussed difficulty, but also a valuable rough indication of the ranks of animal life among which we may, not unreasonably, expect to find possible candidates for a future existence. Let us permit ourselves to guess any epoch in the human creature’s development when it becomes immortal. Then we may, not too audaciously, extend our hope of immortality

to all animals which have reached *that* stage—whatever it may be. We cannot for a moment suppose the tremendous alternative of immortality or extinction to be decided by arrival at any arbitrary, or merely *physical* turning point, such as may occur at various epochs either before birth, or at the moment of birth, or later. We must believe it to be determined by entrance on some moral or mental stage, such as may be represented by the words Consciousness, Self Consciousness, Intelligence, power of Love, or the like ; by the development, in short, of the mysterious Somewhat above the merely vegetative, or animated life, for which we believe such life to be the scaffolding. If then (as we are wont to take for granted) a child of some six or twelve, or eighteen months' old be certainly an immortal creature, it follows that the stage of existence which involves immortality must be an early one, which many a dog has attained. On the other hand, as those animals which are altogether below the condition of the human infant are not so highly organized or sensitive as ever to suffer torture, our hypothesis allows us to suppose them to become extinct at death, while it leaves us free humbly to trust that *every animal subjected to torture*,—either by science or any other agency,—will live again in conditions of happiness which will amply redress the balance of good in the sum of its existence.

To conclude. Does not every flower of the field offer us a parable which may serve for man and beast alike ? There is a stage of growth when, if the stalk be cut down or the petals torn away, no seed will ripen. There is a further stage when the stalk may be broken and the beautiful petals trodden in the dust, but when the seed will *not* perish, but live, and bloom wheresoever it may be borne by the winds of heaven.

---

---



